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SUBJECT: Brazilian Senators Welcome U.S. Outreach, Exchange
Prospects

Ref: Brasilia 1568

11. (U) Summary. As part of a broad outreach to Brazilian senators August 7-8 on a number of topics, Ambassador Sobel found very high receptivity to the prospects of an increase in bilateral congressional exchanges. Interest is not limited to members of the foreign affairs committee, and topics of interest include bilateral and international trade, regional integration, national security, energy, and others. A Brazilian delegation on biofuels could be visiting Washington as early as this October. End summary.

Foreign Relations Committee Chair Encourages Exchanges...

12. (U) Senator Heraclito Fortes (DEM - Democrats, center-right opposition party; of Piaui), chairman of the Foreign Relations and National Defense Committee, told Ambassador over lunch on August 8 that he had been on an official trip to the U/K recently with two other senators and three deputies. (Reftel reports Fortes's broader foreign policy comments.) He traveled in his capacity as chairman of the Foreign Relations and National Defense Committee. He said Brazilian legislators often travel to other countries and to international organizations, and a trip to the U.S. in the near future is essential, if only to discuss the trade relationship, although there is much more to discuss. He also emphasized the importance of learning about other countries and sharing information about one's own country. Senator Fortes said there is an increased desire in Brazil for dialogue between congresses, that congresses must work toward bringing countries together, in spite of inevitable ideological differences, and these dialogues should focus on their countries' interests, not just the presidents of the respective countries.

...As Do Other Senators

13. (U) Fortes reiterated his interest in exchanges in remarks at an August 8 dinner organized and hosted for the Ambassador by Senator Joao Tenorio (PSDB - Brazilian Social Democracy Party - center-left opposition party; of Alagoas), chairman of the biofuels subcommittee of the agriculture committee. With the exception of Fortes and foreign relations committee vice-chair Eduardo Azeredo (PSDB, of Minas Gerais), most of the dinner attendees were members of the biofuels subcommittee. Marcos Montes (DEM, of Minas Gerais), a member of the Chamber of Deputies special committee on bioenergy, also attended. The ten senators and one deputy at the dinner

repeatedly expressed their pleasure -- and even surprise -- at the Ambassador's effort to reach out and their interest in increasing exchanges with the U.S. Senate. Along with Fortes, Tenorio talked about the important common interests that the U.S. and Brazil share, cited the numerous times he and his committee had already had contact with senior USG officials, and expressed his hope that such contacts could increase.

¶4. (U) Invited to address the guests, Senator Marisa Serrano (PSDB, of Mato Grosso do Sul) also welcomed the outreach, but stressed the importance of our countries working together in "partnership," a theme repeated by many Brazilians. Noting what an honor it was for the United States that so many senators to have taken time out during their busy schedules to attend the dinner, the Ambassador stressed his interest in spurring exchanges and working closely with the Brazilian congress on our common interests. Visiting House Western Hemisphere Subcommittee staff director Jason Steinbaum also encouraged such cooperation, noting that Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY) hoped to lead a delegation to Brazil in the fall.

Over the course of the dinner, Tenorio made clear that his committee would be interested in a trip focused on biofuels, perhaps as early as October. (Separately, staffers told emboffs that Tenorio would probably look for an invitation before making plans.)

¶5. (SBU) The outreach events included some of the most respected leaders in the Senate. A dinner in the Ambassador's honor given on August 7 by Jorge Werthein, executive director of the Latin American Technological Information Network, included ten leading senators. On that occasion, Ambassador spoke with Gerson Camata (PMDB - Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, a non-ideological party in the government coalition; of Espirito Santo) about Camata's likelihood of becoming the next Senate president within weeks. Camata told

BRASILIA 00001850 002 OF 002

Ambassador that he would be interested in assuming the presidency if he had the backing of the government, even though it could take several more weeks for the Calheiros affair to be resolved. Senate president Renan Calheiros (PMDB, of Alagoas), under fire for alleged corruption, will probably be forced out of both the Senate and the Senate presidency, and Camata is the most likely successor. (Note: Support for Calheiros from the Presidential Palace has waned, according to media reports. Although Calheiros is personally well-liked by many senators, his situation has become untenable and he will probably leave the Senate presidency, and possibly even the Senate. The next president will probably come from the PMDB, since the largest party in the Senate normally holds the presidency. Camata's probable opponent is Jarbas Vasconcelos (PMDB, Pernambuco).

Camata is the more likely winner because he would be a good consensus candidate; Vasconcelos is well-known for his anti-Lula views. The Calheiros affair will probably be resolved within a month or two. End note.)

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The reception senators have given our outreach effort was unexpectedly warm and enthusiastic, which bodes well for work on several fronts, including the legislative resolution of our property issues. Although suffering through the Calheiros corruption scandal, the Congress will play a key role in shaping the Brazilian approach to such items as energy policy, biofuels, and trade. As opinion makers, both in Brasilia and in their home districts, their understanding of U.S. policy and the way in which our government operates can be essential to helping advance our objectives and enhance our bilateral relationship. Embassy will look for ways to build on these initial outreach efforts, especially through exchanges between the U.S. and Brazilian congresses.

SOBEL